



Bertha A. Kleinman

At The Last Hour

Christmas News
Prize Poem



"THE PRINCE."

In the storm-beaten dome of the abbey's lone height
Thrilled the tones of a quiet and simple refrain,
And the echoes crept out on the dim, sobbing night,
And were borne thro' the lowering mist of the rain.
With a smile that had lost all its haughty disdain,
Breaking over the gray of his wizened old mien,
Stood a form at the portal, who paused to survey
As the crude, lowly flock should make way in their hearts
For the peace of the morrow—the Prince's own day.

Calm and rapt were the faces uplifted in prayer
To the cross with its Burden enshrined in each soul,
As they worshiped the Sanctified welcoming there,
And in humble devotion drew into his fold,
Crude and lowly and child-like in trust to behold—
'Twas in silence Prince Carlos gazed over the scene;
O'er the forms that were kneeling in simple array,
O'er the dim, narrow aisle with its carpet of sand
And the cross at the altar rude-graven and gray.

Prone to linger, he passed thro' the dim, curtained door
And was whirled thro' the darkness and calm of the storm
To the brilliant cathedral ere vespers were o'er.
On his mantle the light shimmered fulgent and warm
And as courtiers paused and bowed low to his form,
O'er his lips thrilled the murmur, 'How precious is power!
And how grateful tonight is the heart that I bring
For the rank that exalts me in honor and ease
To repose in the trust and the smile of the king!"

'Twas a murmur by flattering pageants unheard,
And the empty thanksgiving was lost in the throng;
But engulfed in his own feeble heart every word
Cried for meaning and stirred as in passionate song,
Woke the echo, "Humility only is strong."
And Prince Carlos sank back on his crimson-hung chair,
But the smile on the kingly face close to his side,
With the warmth of the royal hands' clasping was dimmed,
And the furrowed old visage grew stern in its pride.

With the vesper hymn stirring thro' steeple and dome
And the vesper bells pealing their song in the rain—
Like a thunderous atabal dinning each tone—
Clanged the storm in his heart that was throbbing with pain,
But he fancied a solemn voice whispered his name,
Speaking out from the cross with its garlands of bloom—
O'er the odorous incense and flowers' winged breath—
"Let the sinner prepare and the haughty submit,
For the Sinless has suffered and yielded to death."

In his velvet-strewn chamber, all mellow with light,
Where the shadows like spectres played over the wall;
Long he tossed thro' the stillness that reigned with the night
And in dreams of the natal day soon to befall,
Fought the fight of rebellion with memory's dark thrall,
From the dim-shrouded vistas of fame-burnished years
Issued myriads of phantoms to claim him their own,
As they pointed, with fingers relentless and grim,
To his life's vain advance with its harvests unsown.

Once he dreamed that with knights of mediaeval renown,
And with vassals attending in glittering mail,
Over deserts he toiled and thro' forest's dark frown
As he searched thro' the world for the mystical Grail;
And in fear of the end, should he falter or fail,
He awoke, as a voice that had guided his dream
Seemed to whisper of promise and triumph to be,
Swelling softly the shadows that compassed him 'round,
Till they rang with the solemn words, "Follow thou me!"

Clear and calm as a chime breathed the quiet word,
"Come,"

Like the far-straying tone of an anthem sublime,
And with fingers unsteady and eager and numb,
Wide he opened the lattice that clanged to the wind.
In his breast stirred a joy all unknown nor defined,
As he stepped from the casement out into the storm,
Where the rain dripping over the dim, hanging eaves,
Drenched the vestments that clung to his shivering form,
Ere it fell with his tread on the dank, trampled leaves.

Thro' the castle's broad portals and out on the hill,
Past the gaunt, sighing oaks and the wide swelling stream,
Over fields with their seeds lying shrouded and still—
On and on, like a spectre that glides thro' a dream,
Toiled the wavering steps in the darkness unseen.
"Prince of Peace, great Redeeming One, teach me thy will!"
Rang the cry from his heart, long a stranger to prayer,
Till beyond where a lonely hut lifted its height,
Rose a voice like an answer awaiting him there.

Low and wretched with poverty stamped at its door,
Rude and mean as the squalor it mirrored within,
Crouched the lowly abode of the crushed and the poor.
Far removed stood its frown from the world's eager din—
Like a fugitive hiding the blot of his sin;
And in shrinking Prince Carlos passed in from the rain,
Where a candle-gleam lighted the threshold of stone—
In to tremble with awe in the presence that reigned
Where the scythe of the Reaper crept claiming his own.

'Twas a child's fading eyes that beamed into his face
With the dawn of eternity stamped in their blue,
As the shadows that thronged thro' the desolate place—
Mantled o'er with a hush that was hallowed and new—
Drew aside for the Angel of Peace to pass thro'.
'Twas a child clinging fast to a hardened, brown hand,
As a father bent over the withering form,
And in silent rebellion crushed backward the pain
In a heart that was hardened from conflict with storm.

'Twas the child of a serf, sinking into his rest,
But the child of a king with a message sublime,
Laid a gem-studded crucifix down on his breast
And with trembling lips breathed of the mercy divine
That should welcome a lowly one close to His shrine.
And a prince and a serf in contrition bent low
When the feeble life failed in the midnight's still hour,
As the rustle of mystic wings stirred thro' the gloom—
"In humility only is refuge and power."

O'er the lichen-stained abbey all dim from the storm,
Broke the day's lustrous monarch enthroned in the east,
And high over the cross glimmered down on a form
Lying under its shadow forever at peace.
When the chimes swelling out on the dawning had ceased,
Strangers lifted the jeweled hands stiffened and chill,
And they wondered at finding Prince Carlos alone,
With his silent and haughty lips blanched of their pride
In the smile of a wanderer anchored at home.

BERTHA ANDERSON KLIENMAN

CAMELS TO BE USED FOR TRANSPORTATION IN NEVADA

It is an established fact that there are millions upon millions in mineral wealth lying untouched in the heart of that part of the west known as the Great American Desert, which lies between Salt Lake and extends to the Sierra Nevada, a waterless waste of nearly three thousand square miles. Since the discovery of gold in almost inexhaustible quantities in the midst of this American Sahara, a yearly toll in human lives has been exacted by the thirst of the treasure. The desert claims her price from the horde of adventurous mortals who, while endeavoring to satiate their thirst for gold, forget without that which is far more precious—water. With the discovery of valuable ore at Tonopah in 1900, the desert's claim upon the human life is considered the worst part of this country has been unrelenting, and few stop to count the cost in human life when there are millions in treasure in the balance.

A scheme is now well under way to overcome the terrors of the desert that is expected to do more than an untold fortune for a group of men who have undertaken the task—that of importing camels into this country from the Orient. Surely the ingenuity of the American mind must have reached the limit of its ingenuity when the use of camels for gold mining purposes must be resorted to, which is about to be done.

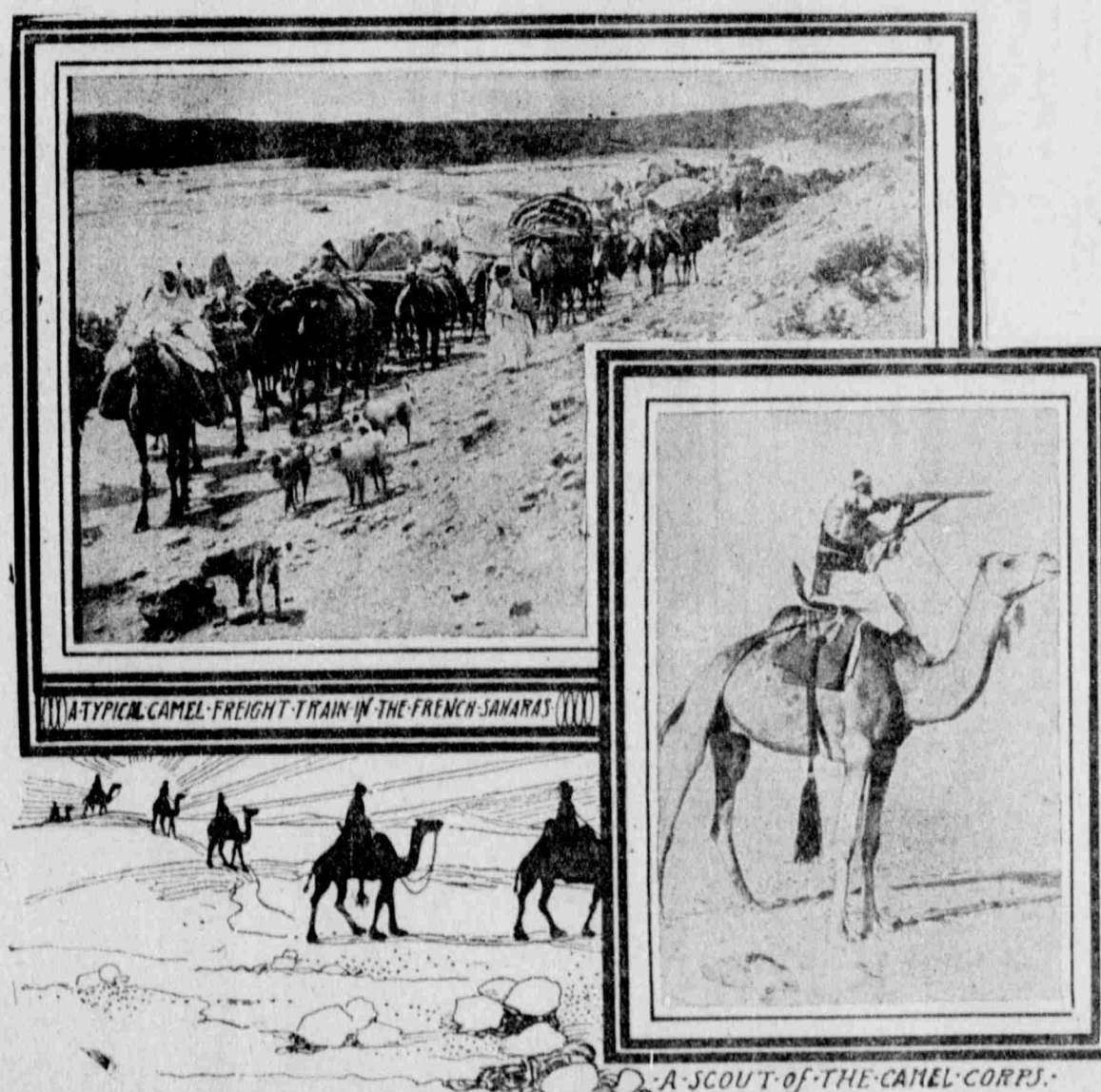
The enterprise recalls the effort of the government to combat the forces of nature in the same way. It was in 1848 that Jefferson Davis, who was then secretary of war, conceived the idea of organizing a camel corps in the army, and commissioned Maj. Henry Wayne to proceed to Cairo and arrange for the Egyptian government to import into the United States a number of male and female camels for service in the arid western country in campaigns against the Indians, and for rapid transportation of the mails and supplies. The navy department, in harmony with the mission, ordered Admiral David D. Porter, who was then commander of the fleet, to take command of the ship Supply and proceed to the Red Sea to transport the camels to this country.

Shortly after the arrival of the mission in the Orient, there occurred an episode which almost led to international complications, and caused his highness the viceroy of Egypt, great mortification at the time, but the incident possessed a humorous side as well. It seemed that when Major Wayne and Lieutenant Porter, requested through the United States consul, permission to purchase and transport to this country a small herd of camels as a scientific experiment, the viceroy was extremely gracious, and as a mark of his good will and interest ordered that six camels, the finest obtainable, should be purchased and presented to the United States government through the representatives sent with the mission.

This was very gratifying to the officers, who were notified that the gift was ready to be delivered to them. Dress uniforms were donned and a large detail of sailors was brought ashore to act as a guard or honor for the royal gift. When the American representatives arrived at the viceroy's palace at the hour appointed imagine their consternation and indignation to find awaiting them six of the most mangy, flea-bitten and decrepit representatives of the camel tribe they had ever seen, several of which had to be propped up on their feet to keep them from lying down and shuffling about the mortal coil, frankly conceding that their time to die from old age and disease was some time overdue.

Wayne and Porter, after an interval of silent indignation, withdrew with their escort and immediately notified the viceroy, through the American consul, that they must decline to accept the gift. It being quite evident that either his highness was pleased to exploit a species of very low comedy or offering a direct insult to the United States.

Immediately upon the delivery of the diplomatic note there was a hurry and bustle, a running back and forth, in and around the viceroy's palace the equal of which had never before occurred in the recollection of the oldest slave. Suddenly a horseman, richly dressed and gorgeously decorated, dashed madly from the palace over to the consulate, requested an immediate audience with the American officers, and, hardly waiting for breath, poured forth in five



A TYPICAL CAMEL-FREIGHT TRAIN IN THE FRENCH SAHARA

A SCOUT OF THE CAMEL CORPS

or six languages, on behalf of his highness, the viceroy, most profuse apologies and regrets. They were informed that a thieving steward of the house-

camels would not be discovered until they were far away over the sea.

The matter was quickly adjusted, and diplomatic relations resumed, but it cost the avaricious steward something which was probably worth more to him than the six camels—his head.

In addition to the gift of the viceroy, a number of the fine dromedaries, the blue-blooded races of Oman, were purchased, together with camels trained to carry heavy burdens, and all were placed on board the Supply, which was in readiness for the return trip.

While at sea six calves were born in the hold, and every possible care of them was taken. Lieut. Porter being untrusting in his efforts to safeguard his charges against injury. Although severe storms were experienced during the entire trip, only four of the young camels died and four were made at Indiana, Tex., and the herd of 34 desert steeds landed on American soil, being a gain of 1 over the number they started with, and all in excellent health.

MARCHED TO SAN ANTONIO.

As soon as a good test had been given the animals the herd was marched to San Antonio, a distance of about 133 miles, where it was proposed to establish a camel ranch, strange to say, the cavalrymen did not take kindly to the new mounts. While they thought nothing of riding off-hand the wild horse of the plains, it was another matter when it came to navigating these "ships of the desert," whose gait when in motion would discount the best effort of a ruddier jack in a Chinese slalom, and their wild doubtless have concurred with Kipling's idea that the camel was "a devil, an ostrich and an orphan child in one."

In this case, it is almost everything new, these were many who were frankly skeptical of the camel proposition and particularly so were the citizens of San Antonio. Wishing to put an end to the annoyance, Maj. Wayne invited the whole town to be present at a test of what his camels could do, and the entire populace turned out to witness the exhibit.

When the hour arrived Maj. Wayne brought out one of the animals, and having caused it to kneel, had two boys weighing 115 pounds each placed upon its back. The scoffers laughed at the idea of the camel being able to rise, when two more boys were added, making a total of 135 pounds. At the word of command the camel arose without apparent effort and walked away with its load. The Texans looked

on the camels with marked respect from that hour.

A test of the capacity of the camels to travel over steep activities was made by loading a number with about 400 pounds of army baggage each and marching them over a rugged mountain by way of an almost impassable trail. The outfit covered the distance of 60 miles in two days, subjected to most inclement weather, and arrived without a sign of fatigue.

Later a camel journey from Fort Defiance, N. M., to the California desert, a distance of about 500 miles, was made to open a new road, through an unexplored wilderness of forest, plain and desert. The journey occupied 15 days, and the commander's report gives a splendid account of the camel's work under conditions which no other animal could have possibly endured.

Then came a change in the administration, which was not very favorable to the camel corps idea. New officers who knew scarcely anything of animals were sent to take charge of the herd. Shortly afterward came the Civil war and the camels were forgotten. Some of the animals escaped into the desert, where they increased to a certain extent and ran wild in small herds, striking terror to the hearts of the Indians, who were very much afraid of them. Many strange tales are told of their presence in different parts of the southwestern country.

A number fell into the hands of the soldiers during the war, and because the soldiers lacked knowledge of the proper care and handling of camels many of the herd became diseased and died.

As late as 1876 camels were used in Nevada and Arizona, but they afterward disappeared. Many believe that had the project been carried out as it was started the camel corps of the United States army would today be the equal of any in the world.

It now remains to be seen what this latter-day camel project will bring forth. The idea has been thought out from a purely commercial standpoint and so with American brains, money and determination behind it, it is safe to say it will succeed. The promoters of this enterprise are western men of experience who are giving no publicity to their plans and the "Ships of the Desert" will, in all probability, be brought into this country consigned to a well known animal trainer, who supplies zoological parks and circuses, so in this way the public will be none the wiser until the camel corps is in operation on the American Sahara.